

VOICES 4 YOUTH

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FLOYD COUNTY
YOUTH
SERVICES
BUREAU



Splish Splash - More than a Saturday Bath

Saturday, August 22, dawned overcast and wet with drizzle. But the shelter kids were up for the scheduled car wash. The hot dogs were grilled, the sign wavers were at the Grant Line end of our driveway and the energy level was especially high for a Saturday.



Crossing Christian Church provided great volunteers including kids and adults. Through the day we washed over a dozen vehicles and sold or gave away a number of lunches. We earned about \$180 dollars and were visited by longtime friends and made a few new ones. Several people took a tour of the shelter.

As the afternoon warmed up and the kids figured out that they were already wet—the usual happened and like any other family, the water fight began. Neither staff nor volunteers were spared.



Our last customer of the day was a World War II veteran who entertained the kids with explanations of service medals and tales of battle. In exchange the kids demanded that his thorough car wash and dry be “on the house”. It was a generous end to a fun filled day.

A Shelter Cat for the Shelter Kids



Say hello to Boots, the only permanent resident of the Youth Shelter. Boots was named Mother Goose when she joined us in early September, but the residents immediately dubbed her with her current name in honor of her 4 white paws. The one year old female was living at the NAFC Animal Shelter when a cooperative effort among Animal Shelter Director David Hall, community activist Ruthanne Wolfe and Rita Sasse, our Community Liaison, made a long time wish for the Youth Shelter come true. Boots is very affectionate and spends her nights sleeping in the girls' dorm moving from bed to bed for cuddles. During the day she runs the halls, naps in a sun-warm seat or sits in a window waiting for the kids to get home from school.

Inside this issue:

Schools Starts on a Right Note	pg 2	Harvest Homecoming	pg 5
Generous Neighbors	pg 2	Kids Helping Kids	pg 5
A Special Letter from Leah	pg 3	Trunk or Treat	pg 5
Dear Santa	pg 4	The Holidays	pg 6

School Starts on the Right Note

In early September we received a call from Metro United Way in the Jeffersonville Office. The Clark and Floyd County **Walgreens** store managers had been running a "Back to School" campaign to gather school supplies and paper. We were selected as one of the recipients of this gift from the entire community. We brought home a couple hundred pounds and feel that we are pretty well set for the year. Thank you!!

We were also lucky enough to have **Crossing Christian**

Church gather supplies and backpacks for us.

Tonya Gutledge, with the **Pillsbury Salaried Women's Group** called to get a list of specific needs (we never have enough 1 1/2 inch wide binders) that were still unmet. This group raised funds through bakesales and with the money, they filled in many of the gaps.

The **IUS Children's Center** and the University Hospital Combined Giving Campaign also supplied us with back-

packs and classroom staples.

These generous gifts will benefit over 300 children that pass through our doors during this school year. They are also supporting the 100+ kids in the New Directions program in 5 local elementary schools. All of these children have financial difficulties at home. Starting the new academic year with "cool" and complete supplies sets a the right note for a great school year.

Generous Neighbors

Ben Franklin Crafts - We have a number of talented people on our childcare staff. Beth is one and she wanted to teach a number of the residents yarn arts like crocheting and plastic canvas.

There's no money in the budget for this type of activity so we turned to the community. Ben Franklin Crafts in New Albany Plaza and their customers responded to our call in a big way. The store has a collection box near the cashier and each week we gather donated craft supplies.

We started small with yarn craft supplies and have branched out as the kids explore their opportunities to become more artistic. The weekend of November 14 brought 10 boxes for craft supplies so we will be working with the kids on a number of projects like fabric painting, needle work, sun-catchers and paper crafts.

Through our small effort at Ben Franklins have received an added bonus—volunteers!!!. Several crafty folks have volunteered to help teach and work with the kids as they explore their creativity and learn new skills.

If you are interested in passing on a skill, please contact Rita at (812) 948 5481 to learn of volunteer opportunities.

RSVP - The Retired Senior Volunteer Program let their members know in their newsletter that we were looking for gently used luggage for our residents as they leave for a new home. The response was phenomenal with over 60 cases and bags being donated by a dozen generous seniors.

Our thanks to each of these folks for allowing our kids to leave for the next phase of their lives with a bit more dignity.



The Sunnyside Master Gardeners in Georgetown read about our need for fresh fruits and vegetables in the Perdue Extension Office newsletter. Bonnie Cummings, a member of the group, has made several deliveries to the shelter over the summer. The peppers and tomatoes have diversified our menus and given the kids a new appreciation of where food comes from and what effort it takes to bring it to the table.

We are hoping to expand this relationship by planning trips to gardens this coming spring and summer.

A Special Letter from Leah

Leah Pezzarossi has been the Executive Director since 2004

Dear friends of the bureau,

I want to take this opportunity to write about some broad advocacy issues regarding children to show the connection between advocacy at the state level and our young people's well being right here in our community.

Some of you may be aware of the latest report from the *Every Child Matters* Education Fund that shows Indiana ranks eighth in the nation in child deaths resulting from abuse or neglect from 2001 to 2007. The additionally frightening fact is that the actual number of these deaths is unknown, but believed to be much higher. These deaths are results of everything from repeated physical abuse over time to a child left unsupervised in a bath.

According to *Every Child Matters*, it is largely an accident of geography whether abused or neglected children receive the full protection they need. In other words, Indiana is fully responsible for the statistics cited in the report, as well as fully responsible for improving the situation. Indiana's rank for the number of deaths is very much mirrored in where it falls in the rankings for funding for child protection.

So, how is this information reflected in the life of a single child in the child protection system? Here are just a few examples:

- Fewer on-grounds recreational activities, extra-curricular activities, and off grounds activities – This directly affects youth development and leads to morale problems from feeling that they are less worthy of participation in "normal" activities.
- Less individual attention as agencies have had to increase the ratio of children to direct care staff.
- Fewer specialized treatment programs and fewer step down opportunities as those programs are closed.
- Fewer opportunities to overcome barriers to school achievement because of reduction in programs like tutoring.

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) continues flat lining and cutting reimbursements to agencies working to protect children, but DCS's administrative budget has gone up every year since 2005. Additionally, DCS's administrative budget went from \$55 million in 2005/06 to \$128 million in 2009/2010. The administrative funds are not spent on direct services for children. DCS also paid for all of their local offices to be remodeled to modernize them as well as make them all look the same.

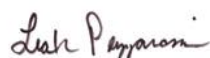
According to a survey of 73 agencies in Indiana, at the same time that DCS sent back \$50 million in state funds to the State coffers at the end of June 2009, DCS refused to pay for:

- Prescription medication that children needed when Medicaid had not been established or had been discontinued.
- School uniforms for children in emergency shelter.
- Initial clothing for children on admission to the facility.
- Eye glasses.
- A root canal in lieu of a tooth being pulled, as recommended by a dentist.
- Continuing placements for children who needed them, instead returning children home with the plan that if placement disrupts, the child goes to the Department of Corrections.
- Periodic polygraph checks for children in sex offender programs.

We have experienced issues like this with a number of children in our shelter. In two cases, we were told not to take sick children to the doctor because the children hadn't yet been enrolled in Medicaid, and DCS did not want bills from the doctors. How can a child be removed from a home because it has been deemed "unsafe", when safety outside of the home isn't guaranteed?

It is important that you let your state government know what you think of the priorities being demonstrated in Indiana, especially in light of the *Every Child Matters* report. Contact your state legislators, write letters to your government officials, and write letters to the editors of local papers. This is extremely crucial in a time when Indiana is experiencing a tight budget. The protection of children should be a priority, there are many other areas in which spending can be cut, and the funds available ought not be spent on office renovation, and administrative costs.

Sincerely,





Dear Santa

I didn't plan on being in the shelter at Christmas, but here I am. I want to be home and I want my Mom and Dad to be happy. I want to see my little brother. I know you can't make these wishes come true.

But there is something you can do. I want to spend a super great day away from here. Maybe at the movies with lunch at McDonalds or a pizza place. Or I could try bowling and get some ice cream on the way back. It would be cool to go to the IMAX movie at the Science Center in Louisville too. I've got 2 weeks off of school over Christmas with nothing to do. Please Santa, gimme a break!

Hey Santa, you aren't on my call list so you can call Rita and let her know if I can count on you. Her number is (812)948-5481

Thanks

A shelter kid

(the smart, nice one)

Harvest Homecoming

Saturday, October 3, was a really busy day for everyone at the shelter. The afternoon involved 2 staff taking 12 kids to view the parade. We had several young residents at the time who got a real kick out of the clowns while the older ones enjoyed the chance to get out and see friends in a non-school setting.



Later the entire shelter attended the "Taste of Our Place" at IUS Hoosier Room thanks to the donation of tickets from the Department of Child Services. Kids and staff alike enjoyed tasting foods not usually on our menu. The long fun-filled day resulted in a bunch of tired, happy kids.

Local Kids Helping Kids

The shelter has a great relationship with New Albany Floyd County Schools. Our residents attend a number of schools including New Albany High School, Hazelwood Middle School, Grant Line Elementary and Mt. Tabor Elementary and Prosser. It often comes as a surprise to the community that our children are enrolled in the local schools, but the shelter has always sought to keep a child's routine as normal as possible during their stay with us. The yellow school busses are at our back door every morning and afternoon.

Our residents participate in extracurricular activities like school sports and dances.

Two schools have been especially kind to us recently. Mt Tabor Elementary conducts a Red Ribbon Drive in conjunction with their antidrug campaign. Promises to stay clean and sober are made with donations. We have again been the recipient of this generous program. The students collected toiletry items like hairbrushes and deodorants and school supplies and several boxes of each were delivered in early November.

Highland Hills Middle School has two campaigns each year to gather items for organizations with needs. The student council was kind enough to choose the shelter as the recipient of the fall drive bounty.

With a list of our needs, classes determined what they wanted to collect and on Friday the 13th of November (a lucky day), we picked up several hundreds of pounds of hairbrushes, tissues, soaps, toothpaste, shampoos and deodorants and condiments. The kids understood and agreed that the 3 basics of a kitchen are: ketchup, Bar-B-Que sauce and ranch dressing. We now have enough of these to finish out 2009 and start the new year.

Our thanks to each student, parent and employee of these great school communities for their generosity.

Trunk or Treat at the Old Asylum

Our first foray into a Halloween fundraiser was a bit soggy. Though we had 15 brave souls who came out with the trunks of their cars or the back of their SUVs decked out.

We had about 20 trick or treat tikes visit during the first half hour and then the rain fell.

Before everyone got too wet, the childcare staff took all 17 of our residents out to gather goodies from the trunk sponsors.

Three sponsors won prizes in scary categories including gift certificates from Aebersold Florist, Tumbleweed restaurant, Carmickle Photography and

Strandz & Threadz Salon.

Thanks to these community minded businesses and Linda Greener and Shara Wiesenhour for decorations, our trunk sponsors and volunteer Pat Wimsatt, who was our security.

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YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU**

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The shelter is looking for a sponsor of the Voices 4 Youth newsletter. Contact Rita Sasse at 812-948-5481 for details



The Holidays are upon us



Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years - all times to get together with family and friends. Unfortunately, some of our residents won't have the opportunity to do those things. But the staff and volunteers will be working hard to make these holidays away from home as pleasant as possible.

We have a needs list that you can help with. Items are needed by our staff to make caring for our kids easier and more efficient. The "Ahhs and Ohhs" are items that kids just enjoy.

To help call Rita at 948-5481

Staff Magic Wands

Food Processor
Hand or Stand Mixer
TV and/or DVD player
Upright Bagless Vacuum cleaner
Large pots and pans
Cookie/pizza sheets
Waffle iron
Hairbrushes and girls hair accessories
Birthday party paper goods
Craft and Art Supplies

Ahhs and Ohhs

Movie passes
Bowling passes
Fast food gift cards
Ice cream shop or coffee shop gift cards
Gift certificates for hair cuts
Zoo or museum passes
Board games and puzzles
WII games (we have the basic package)
Hand held electronic games
Girls eye makeup and flavored Chapsticks